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LB 364, 543

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Mr. President, I'm going to support Senator Chambers' motion to return. He has, in his opening, identified a couple of very, very serious issues. And in fact, they're issues that are pending in the Education Committee. They're the subject matter of an Education Committee priority bill, LB 364. It's a bill that I introduced. I'm glad to see that Senator Chambers and I are agreeing on this issue. And I would only hope that you listen carefully to what he had to say, because he is absolutely right. What we have are three scholarship programs. And if you recall, when we discussed this issue before, I handed out materials, I'm not going to bore you with them again, but it shows the disparity in the way we're distributing the funds. If you remember, we had a student whose family was very poor, or at least poor in relationship to others who would be sending students to school. They were expected...the family would be expected to contribute less than \$500 per year to that student's education. The amount of benefit that that student could receive at Creighton University from the funds that we're talking about was almost three times the amount of money that could be received by a student at Chadron State College. I made the point then, and I would remake the point, that by allocating so many dollars to the student at Creighton University...and I have nothing against attending Creighton University, all of you know that I attended Creighton University...we are foreclosing the opportunity for some other student to attend a public school, and we're excluding them at a ratio of about three to one. That is not a rational use of scarce dollars. I have heard that we can justify that misallocation, or that inefficient use of resources, because we want to maintain diversity. Well, I'm unable to determine what Creighton University adds to diversity of educational opportunities in the state of Nebraska. I'm unaware that they offer anything that you cannot find at a public institution, nor am I aware that any of the other private institutions offer anything that you cannot find at a public institution. If you recall the last time we talked about this issue, I asked to be advised if there were any such differences. I have yet to be advised that there are. So I don't think it's about diversity. I've also been advised that it's necessary to kind of level the playing field, because the public institutions really have much more expensive educational opportunities, and